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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [UNHRC](#) [ZI](#) [ZA](#)

SUBJECT: ZAMBIA PREPARED TO BREAK WITH TRADITION AT UN  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL?

REF: SECSTATE 93373

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Booth for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. A senior Zambian Foreign Ministry official, Winnie Chibesekunda, is predisposed to breaking with NAM, AU, and SADC ranks at UN fora in order to address issues individually and on their own merit. In response to the reftel demarche, she expressed some willingness to support country specific human rights resolutions, particularly those that offer technical assistance or in cases where countries under scrutiny have not cooperated with UN efforts. The Zambian diplomat praised former President Mwanawasa for his tough stance on Zimbabwe but lamented that this support did not seem to be continuing under the Banda administration. Chibesekunda noted that breaking with African consensus will require State House support, which she considered tentative. End Summary.

12. (C) At a September 11 meeting, the newly appointed head of the Zambian Foreign Ministry's international organizations unit, Winnie Chibesekunda, told poloff that she intends to break with Zambia's traditional practice of bloc voting at the UN and hopes to address each issue, particularly at the Human Rights Council (HRC), on its own merit. Chibesekunda offered few reactions to the individual points of the reftel demarche and did not comment on Zambian positions or plans. Although she acknowledged her government's discomfort with country-specific human rights resolutions, she did not rule out the possibility of Zambian support, particularly if a resolution could be tied to technical assistance. Chibesekunda said she was disinclined to continue supporting countries like Sudan and North Korea that "take Zambian support for granted" while failing to adequately cooperate with the UN.

13. (C) Chibesekunda noted that (by her initiative) Zambia had withheld its support for North Korea at a UN vote earlier this year -- something that had taken a toll on the GRZ-North Korean bilateral relationship. However, she said that Zambia's likelihood of voting more independently (outside NAM, AU, or SADC consensus) will be constrained by others within the government who would prefer to maintain established alliances out of political expediency, loyalty, or custom. She pointed out, for instance, that President Banda had improved relations with Mugabe -- despite ongoing problems in Zimbabwe -- in an effort to mend the damage inflicted by former President Mwanawasa's open (and "much needed") criticism of the Zimbabwean leader. Chibesekunda underscored that during the 1970s and 1980s, the GRZ had wielded considerable political influence and respect in southern Africa during the liberation struggles of neighboring nations; Mwanawasa, she said, was on the road to restoring that respect before his death.

14. (C) Comment: Chibesekunda suggested that Zambia's Perm

Rep in Geneva, Darlington Mwape, a former legal advisor to Mwanawasa, may also share her perspective. However, given that many in the GRZ, including Banda, remain true to their liberation era ideas of the West, Chibsekunda will be fighting an uphill battle and may not (in her words) "last very long." Additionally, Zambia's interests will be driven with equal -- if not greater -- force by Zambia's well-established Perm Rep to the UN, Lazarous Kapambwe, who is partly responsible for Zambia's poor voting coincidence with the United States (at zero percent in 2008 on the 13 important votes). Although Kapambwe implied to emboffs that the voting coincidence rate would improve during the Obama Administration, both he and Chibsekunda will be subject to the direction of a Zambian president apparently prone to keeping with Zambia's undistinguished voting practices. Despite this, Chibsekunda's refreshing candor and admirable objectives may lead to some positive changes.

BOOTH